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## ABSTRACT

As educators work to address the challenge of students meeting state standards, alignment of what is tested with what is taught has been identified as a key to successful improvement efforts. This research brief focuses on what research and best practices say about improving alignment between state assessments and district and school curricula. It also discusses the other elements needed to ensure this curriculum is successfully taught. More specifically, this brief describes curriculum coherence, curriculum alignment, and the differences between intended curriculum, implemented curriculum, and attained curriculum. It also provides results from studies that examined curriculum alignment. The brief goes on to discuss the critical elements needed to increase curriculum coherence and alignment, and the benefits and challenges of curriculum coherence and alignment. The brief concludes with a list of critical, teacher-focused components of alignment activities that should be embedded in the process: (1) Make time; (2) keep it simple and focused; (3) make it realistic; (4) raise awareness and keep it raised; (5) decide when, where, how much, and how often; (6) think interdisciplinary; (7) share ideas, tips, and practices; and (8) remember the test. (Contains 25 references.) (WFA)